THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SELECTE ECONOMIC FACTORS AND PARENTING KNO ATTITUDE AND PRACTICES AMONG FELDA SE

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SINOPSIS *: The present study determines the relationships between selected socio-economic factors (age of respondent, education, income and number of children) and parenting knowledge, attitudes, and practices (KAP). Respondents were 80 FELDA settlers selected randomly from the FELDA Serting Scheme in Negeri Sembilan. Data were gathered using an interview-administered questionnaire. Results from the study show that: (1) Majority of the respondents achieved high scores on parenting knowledge (100%) and parenting attitudes (86%), and medium (89%) scores on parenting practing practices; (2) Respondents' age ($r=0.15$, $P<0.05$) and levels of education ($r=0.14$, $p<0.05$) are positively and significantly related to parenting knowledge; (3) Level of education ($r=0.33$, $p<0.05$) is positively related to parenting attitudes; (4) The monthly income ($r=0.12$, $p<0.05$) of the respondent is positively and significantly related to parenting practices; (5) Parenting knowledge is significantly related to parenting attitudes ($r=0.65$, $p<0.05$), and parenting practices ($r=0.25$, $p<0.05$). The present study concludes that the level of parenting knowledge, attitudes and practices of the FELDA settlers in the study site range from medium to high. Socio-economic factors can influence parents levels of knowledge, attitude, and practices in childrearing.*

INTRODUCTION

Theory and research have indivated that the ecological contexts within which oners live has strong influence on his/ her psychosocial functionings (Belsky, 1984, Bubolz & Sontag, 1993, Bronfenbrenner, 1979, Lerner, 1996). Family socioeconomic resources such as education and age of family members, number of children, and family income are some of the contextual factors that may contribute to a parent psychosocial behavior, including his/ her knowledge, attitude and practices in childrearing. Lerner (1996) asserts that family socioeconomic variables may not only influence parent knowledge, attitude and behavior, but also the development outcomes of children within the family. Children from higher socioeconomic status (SES) have been found to demonstrate better developmental characteristics than their counterparts in the lower SES (Bradley, Caldwell, Rock, Bernard, et al., 1989; Gottfried & Gottfried, 1984).

A review of the literature shows that very few studies in this country have focused on determining the relationships between SES and parents knowledge, attitude and practices in childrearing. In addition, published document on the interrelationships among parenting knowledge, attitude and practices is also rare. In order to furnish the notch in the local literature, the present study was conducted to determine the relationships between selected socio-economic factors and parenting knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) among FELDA settlers in Serting, Negeri Sembilan. Specifically, the study determined: (1) The levels of knowledge, attitudes and practices of the respondents; (2) The relationships between age of respondents, education, family income and number of children in the family and the respondents' parenting KAP; and (3) The relationships among parenting knowledge, attitude and practices.

One if the few studies which examined the relationships between SES factors and parenting KAP was conducted by Rozumah (1995). The study focused on 60 Malay mothers, randomly selected from a district in Perak. The mean age of the mother is 37 years, and their educational level is 7 years. Rozumah found significant correlations between selected socioeconomic variables, i.e., mothers' levels of education, family income, and number of children and parenting knowledge. Mothers who had higher levels of education and

family income, and fewer children in the family have higher level of parenting knowledge. Similar relationships were also found between these there variables and the quality of childrearing practices of the mother. Mothers who had more years of shooling, higher family income and lesser number of children demonstrated better child care practices than other mother in the study. Based on the results of multiple regression analyses, the study concluded that parents' levels of parenting knowledge and childcare practices are shaped by the socioeconomic contexts which the parents lived.

And earlier study by Park and Smeriglio (1986) lends support to Rozumah's findings. Park and Smeriglio (1986) examined the relationship among parenting knowledge, quality of stimulation in the home and infant development on a sample of 126 mothers from diffrent socioeconomic backgrounds. The researchers found that in low socioeconomic status families, parenting knowledge is significantly related to the quality of children practies demonstrated by the mother at home, which in turn is significantly related to their infant developmental performance. Park and Smeriglio (1986) observed that the mothers parenting practices could be influence by their knowledge of the relationship between childrearing practices and child outcomes.

Recent findings by Tsao (1994) parallel those of earlier studies. In the study Tsao focused on 55 fathers and 90 mothers in Taiwan, and determine dif socioeconomic factors such as level if education, occupation and income are significantly related to parenting knowledge, knowledge of child development, and childrearing involvement. The study found that parents' educational level and parental occupation were positively related to the parents' level of parenting knowledge, knowledge of child development and childrearing involvement. Positive relationships were also found between the annual family income of the parents and their level of parenting knowledge of child development. However, the study found negative relationship between the parents' age and their level of parenting knowledge and childrering involvement. The negative relationship between parents' age and parenting knowledge found by Tsao may be inconsistent with expectation, and findings from other studies (e.g., Jarrett, 1982; Vukelich & Kilman, 1985). Younger mothers have consistently been found to have less child development information than older mothers. Subsequently, they tended to demonstrate less favorable attitude and practices in childrearing.

The interelationships among parenting knowledge, attitudes and practices were examined in an exploratory study by Suheir (1989). The study focused on 30 mothers with children aged 5 to 6 years-old. Results form the study suggest that the level of parenting knowledge acquired by parents has and influence on the attitudes and childrearing styles or practices of the parents. Futher analyses revealed the important contributions of parents' attitudes and practices on child outcomes particularly cognitive ablities.

The brief overview presented above indicates that family socioeconomic contexts has significant influence on the level of parenting knowledge, attitude and childcare practices of parents. Parenting knowledge,-attitude and practices are in addition, interrelated, and have importand consequences on child development. The literature thus, underscore the significance of the present stud. Results from this study may highlight the current levels of the FELDA settlers parenting KAP and some of the socio-economic factors that may influence the parenting KAP levels of the FELDA settlers. Findings from the study may be useful to policy makers, programme planners, extension workers and those who are directly or indirectly working on improving parental competence and the quality of the future generations.

METHODOLOGY

Location

The FELDA Serting scheme in Negeri Sembilan was purposively selected as the study site. The research site and population was selected in consultation with the personnel of FELDA headquarters in Kuala Lumpur and Serting, Negeri Sembilan. The FELDA Serting scheme which consists of four adjoining sub-chemes, Serting 1, 2, 3, and 4, is located in the Jempol district, approximately 14km north of Bahau town in the state of Negeri Sembilan. Rubber and oil palf are the two main cash crops grown by the settlers in this scheme. The settlers also breed sheep and cattle. Some of them are also involved in small-scale businesses such as making handicrafts and selling food products. This scheme has basic facilities such as roads, water, electricity, schools, and a clinic.

Sample selection

The study population which is the aggregation of elements from which the sample is actually selected (Barbie, 1989) was the approximately 1500 settlers and their spouses in the FELDA Serting scheme which consists of four adjoining sub-schemes, Serting 1, 2, 3, and 4. Initially, based on the study's criteria, about 150 settlers or their spouses were short-listed for the study with the help of the FELDA personnel in Serting. Random sampling procedures were then employed to select 80 respondents for the study. The unit of analysis was parents who responded to an interview administered questionnaire. The 80 subjects participating in the study had to fulfil the following criteria: were married, had young and teenage children, and were between 25 years and not more that 45 years of age.

Procedure

The respondents were interviewed by a trained research assistant using measures as described below. The interview was conducted in the home of the respondents at a time that was convenient for the respondents.

Measures

Socio-economic factors focused on in the present study were age, sex, housebold income per month, education, number of children and number of years married.

Parenting Knowledge (PK) was assessed using a Likert scale developed by the researcher and an adaptation of the Gilbert and Hanson (1983) Perception of Parental Role Scale (PPRS) and Rozumah's (1995) Parenting Knowledge Scale. The knowledge scale consisted of 15 (12 positive and 3 negative) items. An example of positive statement is " "A-child below the age of 5 is very inquisitive and will explore his environment." An example of negative statement is : "Playing roughly with a child (e.g. shaking the body, throwing the child up and cathing) is not harmful to the child." The responses appeared on a 4-point Likert format ranging from 4 (strongly agree), 3 (agree), 2 (disagree) and 1 (strongly disagree). Scoring was accomplished by summing correct responses, with a higher score indicating better knowl-

edge of parenting. The possible cumulative minimum and maximum score would be 15 and 60, respectively. Based on the possible scores the following index was developed to categorize the respondents into there levels of parenting knowledge: Low (score less than 20); Medium (score 21-40); and High (score 41-60). Reliability assessment of the Parenting Knowledge Scale in the present study yielded an alpha coefficient of 0.7.

Parenting Attitudes was measured using and attitude scale consisting of 15 (8 positive and 7 negative) Likert-type items. The scale was an adaptation of the Schludermann and Schludermann (1979) Parent Attitude Research Instrument (PARIQ4). Any example of a positive statement in scale is: "Anything a child wants to tell a parents is important enough to listen to." An example of a negative statement i: Strict discipline makes children grow up to be mean or rebellious. The response format consisted of a 4-point Likert scale on which respondents indicated whether they strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed or strongly disagreed with each attitude statement. Negative items were revers coded. Each response had a weight on scale of 1 to 4, with 4 for 'strongly agree', 3 for 'agree', 2 for 'disagree' and 1 for 'strongly disagree'. The respondents' total score reflected their parenting attitudes. The higher the score, the more favourable the attitude. The 1 item scale is expected to yield a possible cumulative minimum score of 15 and a maximum score of 60. The following scoring index was used to categorize the respondents into three levels of parenting attitude: Low (score less than 20); Medium (score 21-40), and High (score 41-60). Reliability assessment of the Attitude Scale yielded and alpha coefficient of 0.5.

Parenting Practices was assessed using a Likert-type scale consisting of 10 items constrcted by the researcher. Respondents were asked to indicate how frequently they practised ten parenting behaviours on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from never, seldom, sometimes, often and very often. Each response had a weight on scale of 0 to 4, with 4 for 'very often', 3 for 'often', 2 for 'sometimes', 1 for 'seldom and 0 for 'never'. The total score from the ten items was and index of the respondents' parenting practices. The higher the score, the more positive the parenting practice. The possible cumulative minimum and maximum score was 0 and 40, respectively. From the possible scores attainable the respondents were categorized into three levels of parenting practices: Low (score less than 15); Medium (score 16-30), and

High (score 31-40). An example of a statement included in the scale is : "Keep promises mad to your children." Cronbach alpha calculated for the study sample was however, quite low (0.4).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 displays the socio-economic statistics of the study sample. All the respondents were Malays. Sixty-nine percent (55) of the respondents were mothers and 31% (25) were fathers. The respondents' ages ranged from 26 to 45 years with a mean age of 37.5. Half of the respondents were between the ages 31 to 40 years (50). The respondents had an average level of education with a majority of the respondents having completed at least primary (50%) or lower secondary level (29%) of education. Majority (88%) of the respondents had been married for more than 10 years with mean of 15 years.

The average monthly household income of the respondent was RM774. The respondents had fairly large family sizes with a majority of the respondents having at least 3 to 5 children (64%) and 23% having 6 to 8 children (see Table 1). The average number of children in the family was five.

Table 1
Socio-economic Characteristics of Respondents (n=80)

Variables	N	%
Gender		
Male	25	31.3
Female	55	68.8
Ethnicity		
Malay	80	100
Age		
26-30 years	6	7.5
31-35 years	18	22.5
36-40 years	32	40.0
41-45 years	23	28.8
>46 years	1	1.3
Mean: 37.53		
SD: 4.63		
Education		
No education	3	3.8
Primary	40	50.0
Lower Secondary	23	28.8
Upper Secondary	13	16.3
Others	1	1.3
Marital Status		
Married	76	95.0
Divorced	2	2.5
Widowed	2	2.5

Table 1 continues

Levels of KAP

As presented in Table 2, all the respondents were found to have a high level of parenting knowledge. The respondents' parenting knowledge scores ranged from 41 to 60, with a mean of 44.5 (sd.=3.0). The parenting attitudes scores ranged from 21 to 60, and the mean was 43.2 (sd.=2.6). About 86% of the respondents had high scores on the parenting attitudes scale and about 89% had medium scores on parenting practices. The respondents scores on the parenting practices scale ranged from 16 to 40, with a mean of 26.3 (sd.=3.1) (see Table 2). Results shwo that the respondents had high levels of parenting knowledge and favourable attitudes towards parenting. These findings are important because part research (Maccoby, 1980; Suheir, 1989) has shown that childrend's development will be enhanced if the parents have sufficient knowledge of parenting and practice positive parenting. This findings alsi indirectly suggest the success of family-oriented programmes that have been conducted in FELDA.

Table 2
Levels of Parenting Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP) of Respondents (n=80)

Variables	N	%
Parenting Knowledge		
Low (score less than 20)	-	-
Medium (score 21-40)	-	-
High (score 41-60)	80	100.0
Mean : 44.5		
SD: 3.0		
Parenting Attitudes		
Low (score less than 20)	-	-
Medium (score 21-40)	11	13.8
High (score 41-60)	69	86.31
Mean : 43.2		
SD : 2.6		
Parenting Practices		
Low (score less than 15)	-	-
Medium (score 16-30)	71	88.8
High (score 31-40)	9	11.3
Mean : 26.3		
SD : 3.1		

Correlates of KAP

The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analyses were conducted to determine the relationship between the independnet (socio-economic variables) and the dependent variables (parenting KAP). Tbale 3 presents the results of the correlational analyses. The size of the correlation coefficients between the three dependent variables and the independent variables were found to be small in magnitude.

The age of respondents (r=0.15) and education of respondents (r=0.14) are positively correlated with parenting knowledge. Education of respondents (r=0.33, p<0.05) was found to be positively and significantly correlated with parenting attitudes. Income (r=0.12) was found to be positively correlated to parenting practices. Although the size of correlations between the variables are small, the results can be viewed to be important. According to Borg and Gall (1989) low correlation coefficients are as meaningful as high coefficients in relationship studies as they can signify important relationships between variables. Another important factor to consider in interpreting correlation coefficients obtained in relationship studies is that the influence of any one factor is not likely to be large (Borg & Gall, 1989). Furthermore, the homogenous characteristics of the respondents or the low variability in socio-economic status could have had an influence on the correlation coefficients. In addition to this, the respondents, scores on the dependent variables reflected little variance as they came from similar backgrounds. This too could have contributed to the low correlation coefficients observed (Heneson, Morris & Fitz-Gibbon, 1978).

Table 3
Correlations between the Socio-economic and Dependent Variables (n=80)

Variables	Knowledge r (p)	AttitudesP r (p)	Ractices r (p)
1. Respondent's Age	0.15 (0.00)	-0.09 (0.23)	0.01 (0.46)
2. Education	0.14 (0.19)	0.33 (0.00)	-0.08 (0.23)
3. Years of Marriage	-0.17 (0.06)	-0.22 (0.03)	0.01 (0.45)
4. No of Children	-0.22 (0.02)	-0.22 (0.02)	-0.10 (0.19)
5. Household Income	0.05 (0.34)	0.06 (0.29)	0.12 (0.15)

Relationships among KAP

The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analyses conducted to explore the relationships among the three dependent variables focused on in present study. Table 4 presents the results of the correlational analyses. The sign of the correlations were found to be in the expected direction. Parenting knowledge was found to be positively and significantly correlated (r=0.65, p<0.05) with parenting attitudes. The result therefore suggest that respondents who had high level of parenting knowledge also tend to have more favourable parenting attitudes. Parenting knowledge was also found to be positively and significantly correlated (r=0.25, p<0.05) with parenting practices. Respondents who had high level of parenting knowledge tend to practice more positive parenting or have better parenting behaviour. Parenting attitudes was also found to be positively correlated (r=0.17) to parenting practices although the relationship was not significant (p<0.05). Parents with favourable parenting attitudes also tend to have better parenting practices. These findings are consistent with past research which has shown that level of parenting knowledge has an influence on the attitudes and child-rearing styles or practices of parents (Belsky, 1984; Suheir, 1989) Mcbride, 1991).

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

Based on the results, the present study concludes that the level of parenting KAP of the FELDA settlers in the study site range from medium to high.

Several socio-economic factors such as age of parent, education, income and number of children are significantly related to the parenting KAP levels of the parents involved in the study. These findings may have important implications for FELDA as a social development agency. Younger and less educated parents, and parents with lower income levels may need to be made aware of the-importance of accurate and adequate parenting knowledge in order to promote optimum development among their children. FELDA may also need to develop parenting education modules that are appropriate for young and low educated parents.

The stresses of having insufficient income may hinder some parents to understand, learn or apply quality caregiving. The positive relationships between income and parents KAP found in this study may indicate the need for FELDA to expose or train lower income settlers on creative ways of attaining adequate resources. Families with adequate resources not only have the ability to provide their children with basic needs, but also have the financial ability to structure their environment with cognitively stimulating materials Hannan & Luster, 1991; Rozumah, 1996).

Results of the study also indicated that parents with larger number of children to care for have lower levels of parenting knowledge and demonstrated less favorable parenting attitude. These findings may indicate that parents with more children may be too occupied with child care activities and thus, have lesser time to learn about parenting and child development. The demand of caregiving may also challenge parents ability to display a more conducive attitude. Moreover, poor parenting knowledge may also explain for their unfavourable attitude in parenting.

Findings from the present study should be viewed with caution as it was exploratory and roccelational in nature. The majority of respondents in this study were mothers. Thus, the findings reported here may better feflect the relationship of socioeconomic status and parenting KAP of mothers rather than of fathers. Future research may include higher porportion of fathers so as differences associated with parent gender can be explored. It is also suggested that the relationships of other variables such as family structure, the role of the father in parenting, parenting self-efficacy, self-esteem of the parents with parenting KAP be examined in future studies. The inclusion of

a heterogeneous group of respondents with varying socio-economic profiles in future studies can provide an understanding of how different parents from different social class in parenting knowledge, attitude and practices.

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